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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
EXTENSION SERVICE

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON  
MOBILIZATION OF NEGRO LABOR TO PRODUCE AND HARVEST  
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS NECESSARY TO THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR

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## FARM LABOR JOB

In arriving at this report and recommendations, this Committee recognizes the many different patterns the Extension Farm Labor Program has taken on in the different Southern States due to differences in State and county administration and differences in types of farming, crops, and labor needs. However, it is assumed that all of you have had sufficient information on Public Laws 45, 229, and 529, which make possible assistance in providing an adequate supply of workers for the production and harvesting of agricultural commodities essential to the prosecution of the war and the responsibilities that the State extension services have accepted in connection with this job. As State extension workers, we have accepted the responsibility of getting the educational phase of the program over to the people with whom we work.

In areas where Negro extension workers are employed, a large percentage of the farm work is done by Negroes. In some sections farmers depend almost entirely upon Negroes for hired farm labor. These workers during normal times depend upon farm employment as their principal source of income. Even now, in the present emergency, much of this labor is not being fully utilized.

Most of the important crops grown in the Southern States - cotton, tobacco, rice, peanuts, vegetables, fruits, and small grains, require unusually large amounts of labor during certain periods of the year. In most areas, local people have met this situation by helping during the peak seasons. Their services will be essential for the duration of the emergency, and they will be available provided a constructive program of mobilization is continued.

During 1944 and 1945 approximately 15,000 prisoners of war have and will be used in harvesting peanuts; 15,000, in chopping and picking cotton; 8,000 in harvesting rice; and 5,000, in harvesting sugarcane in the Southern States. Smaller numbers have been used in harvesting crops such as vegetables, fruits, broom corn, and for general farm work. It is unlikely that P.O.W's will be available in 1946, and additional local workers will need to be mobilized to produce and harvest these essential crops.

One of the greatest concerns of the Nation, today, is food production. The shortage of farm labor is one of the most important limiting factors in food production.

This statement is presented with the hope that those concerned will fully realize the importance of farm labor in food production and the responsibility of the whole Extension Service in carrying out the program.

### RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR THE NEGRO EXTENSION STAFF IN SOLVING THE PRESENT LABOR SHORTAGE

In light of Extension's farm labor responsibilities the Committee selected some basic points to which all extension workers should give consideration. These recommendations are presented on the basis of the Committee's thinking, observation, and experience while working in the several States.

1. That effective labor utilization be considered a definite part of our agricultural production program and that educational work be carried on the year round in conjunction with production phases.





2. The educational program should emphasize the effective mobilization of local labor and effective utilization through exchange of labor and machinery, training of inexperienced workers, and use of labor-saving methods and devices.

3. The importance of the contribution each individual can make to the war program by doing farm work, should be emphasized to all people living in or near agricultural areas.

4. In all areas where there are prospective laborers, the fullest use of the services of Negro ministers, teachers, business and professional people, youth organization leaders, etc., should be made in getting information regarding labor needs and employment opportunities to the general public, and in stimulating workers to accept employment on farms.

5. To make best use of leaders, the local county staff should take the lead in organizing, training, stimulating, and informing leaders of the situation and purposes of the program. In many instances the leaders are not sufficiently informed and stimulated. Full use should be made of existing organizations.

6. Arrange for presentation of farm labor needs from the pulpit and at meetings of existing organizations.

7. Arrange for house-to-house canvass of potential workers through neighborhood or block leaders or other leaders selected for this purpose.

8. Arrange with individuals who are unable to do field work to cooperate with the program by caring for children and doing other jobs that will relieve able-bodied persons for farm work.

9. The many benefits that may be derived from greater employment and increased earnings by those who are not fully employed should be emphasized. In addition to contributing to the war effort and the national food supply, greater employment will make possible higher standards of living. It is also desirable to encourage saving for times when opportunities for employment and high wages are not so good as they are at the present. A full realization of these benefits by local leaders will greatly stimulate their interest. This appeal will serve as an incentive in motivating those who are less inclined to work.

10. With cut backs in industry, considerable numbers of Negroes will become available for agricultural work. Careful study of the numbers returning to various farm areas should be made to assure their full utilization in meeting emergency needs, and to assist them in finding satisfactory employment.

11. If unemployment occurs in the postwar period, a farm labor program is needed to assist workers to find satisfactory employment.





12. Extension's contact with farm workers (including migrants) during the war emergency, should be utilized in the postwar period by more completely extending to them Extension's program to improve the living conditions of rural people.

13. The program to mobilize Negro labor can be carried out most effectively where Negro agents, farm labor assistants or recruiters on a per diem basis, are employed. Negro workers can be most effective when their responsibility in the farm labor program is clearly defined and understood.

Respectfully submitted,

The Committee:

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